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Mayor's Round Table Shines Light on Importance of Agrifood and Agribusiness to London's Economic Success

Creating a strategy for a higher profile of Agrifood and Agribusiness in London was the focus of today's Mayor's Round Table bringing together 17 community experts and leaders in the field. By comparing experiences and brainstorming ideas, the participants - representing food production and processing, agricultural research and importing/exporting services - initiated a collaborative action plan to heighten public knowledge of the economic impact of this vital sector in our community and across the region.

London Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) cites Food Processing as one of London's two most active sectors for attracting new investment - the other being auto parts. As such, LEDC will lead the strategy targeting industry expansion and job creation, with a goal to attract two new processing plants with 150 jobs by 2008, while also supporting two expansions of existing plants to generate another 50 new jobs.

"Agrifood/Agribusiness is a sector of tremendous potential for London. With our skilled workforce, ongoing research & development, access to training through Fanshawe, Western, the Agriculture Canada's Southern Crop Protection & Food Research Centre and our competitive cost of doing business, we can brand ourselves as a centre of agricultural excellence," says Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco-Best. "Add to that our geographical location between two Great Lakes, close access to the NAFTA transportation corridor, within a day's drive of a market of 150 million people, and competitive land prices and supply, we are in a strong position to grow."

"We're definitely operating from a position of strength with a strategic location in the centre of a fertile nine-county food production area," says Keith Gibbons, Chair of the Round Table and President of McCormick Canada. "Our strength is supported in KPMG's 2006 Guide to International Business Costs, where Ontario's Southwest Region is described as one of the leading agrifood centres in Canada. So, we have an ideal opportunity now to build on this reputation."

Today's discussion on agrifood completes a series of four Mayor's Round Tables addressing key issues of importance to London, as announced in the Mayor's 2007 State of the City Address. These sessions on Agrifood & Agribusiness, Energy, Life Sciences and Advanced Manufacturing also complement the City's work in the Southwest Economic Assembly. More information on the Mayor's Round Table series is available at ***www.london.ca***.